

Cabbage Research Development Program Awards \$35,400 for 2001

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CONTACT: Linda McCandless, llm3@cornell.edu, 315-787-2417

by Kelsey Dennis

GENEVA, NY: Michael Riner, president of the New York State Cabbage Research & Development Program's advisory board, announced \$35,400 in funding for eight cabbage research proposals during the NYS Vegetable Conference in Syracuse, in early February. "The proposed research projects were excellent," he said. He announced that the R&D assessment would increase to \$3/acre in 2001.

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"The Empire State ranks first in total cabbage acreage in the U.S., which includes fresh market and kraut cabbage," said Cornell University vegetable horticulturist Stephen Reiners, who works at the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station, in Geneva. New York's 2000 cabbage crop was worth over \$80 million.

The Cabbage Research & Development Program Advisory Board met on February 8 at the Experiment Station, to consider the cabbage research proposals they would fund with the money they raised under the \$2.50/acre Research & Development fund assessment in 2000. Last year was the first season the assessment was in effect.

Nine research proposals were received, requesting \$60,000 in funds. Among them were proposals from Cornell University researchers Helene Dillard, Phil Griffiths, Tony Shelton, Lisa Earle, John Roberts, Steve Reiners, Al Taylor, and others.

Projects funded included research in weed management, controlling alternaria leaf spot, breeding improved varieties, controlling pests like Diamondback moth and cabbage maggots, the effects of hot water treatments on cabbage seed quality,

processing, and storage.

"Cabbage usually ranks near potatoes and onions in value among vegetables in New York," said Reiners. "Since it is important to such a large segment of the industry, cabbage researchers at Cornell need to keep the industry up to date on all aspects of production-pest management, culture, post harvest, etc. The industry usually wants to see research on topics that will benefit them in the short term-things like how they'll control thrips or rot next year, or what they can use to control weeds."

Reiners noted that, in the past, the NYS Cabbage Research Association (the former industry funding group comprised only of kraut growers and processors) had been quite good about funding projects more long-term in nature.

"Perhaps the best example is breeding," said Reiners. "They know that a new and better variety may not be available in a single year but realize that an investment in breeding will pay long term dividends."

Reiners expects cabbage production in New York to maintain current levels. "One encouraging note is that some of our competitors-Texas, Georgia and Florida-have reduced acreage over the past two years," he says. "That coupled with extreme cold this winter in those same areas has led to better prices for our growers who sell storage cabbage throughout the winter."

Cabbage is one of the true stars in terms of nutritional value and anti-cancer compounds, and more and more Americans are consuming it for this reason. Because of its nutritional value, Reiners expects to see greater use of cabbage in pre-packaged salad mixes-"a use that would directly benefit the New York industry," he said.

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